

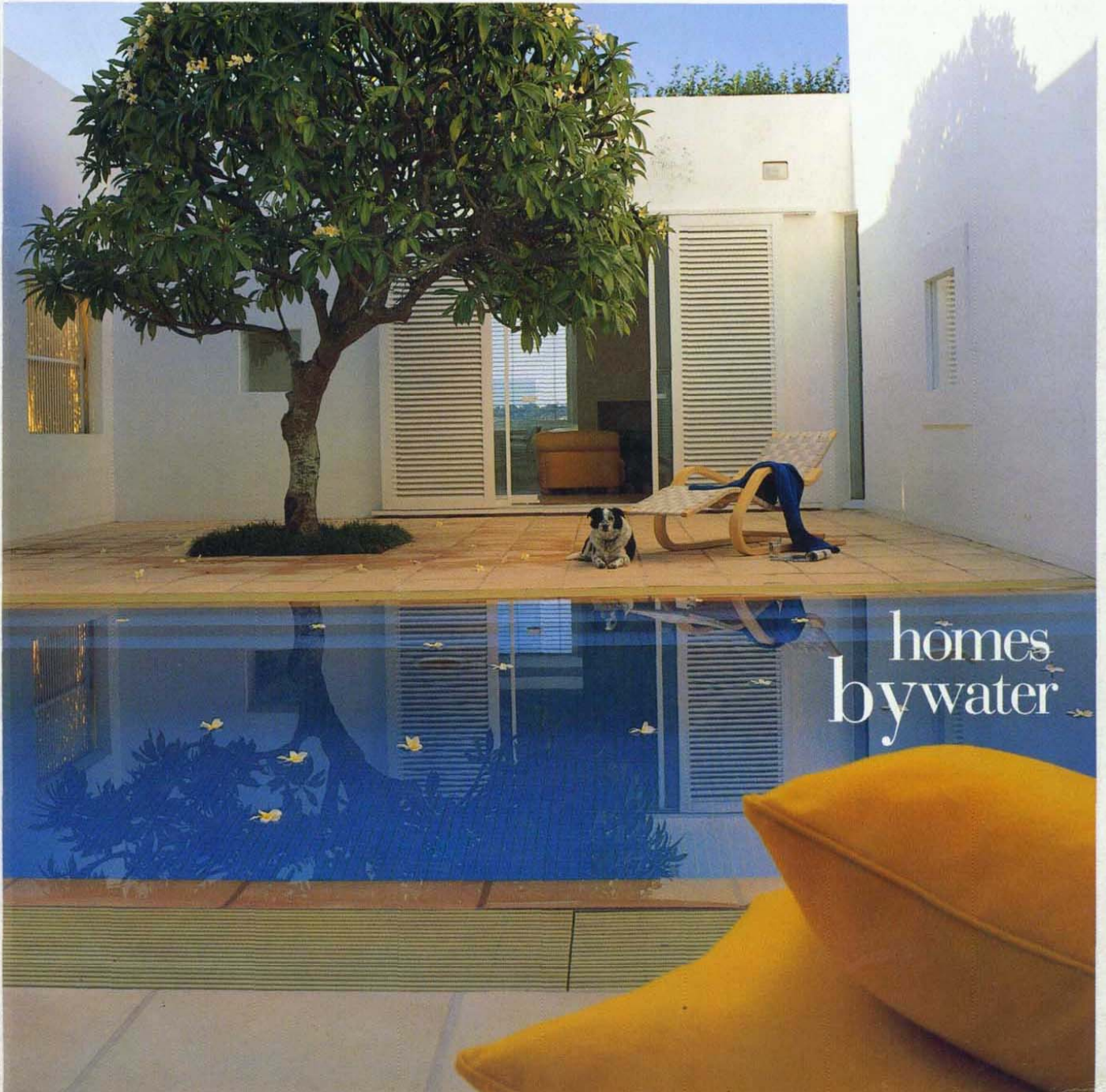
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TEN

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homes
bywater

focus



'STREAM' LINED

Savita Brandt's home on the bank of the Mula-Mutha River in Pune exudes tranquility... and not just because of its proximity to the Osho Ashram!

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If it weren't for the water hyacinths I could have mistaken this river for a lake. With no ripples, no foaming rapids and the water an opaque murky green, you need the hyacinths floating down swiftly (as though on a conveyor belt) to get you to notice that the water is not as still as it appears. This is the Mula-Mutha River that traces its path through the plains of Pune. On one bright, sunny afternoon, I stop over at Savita Brandt's home in Koregaon Park to capture (in words and on film) how this river forms part of Savita's life as well the interiors of her house.

"I get a fantastic view of the river from this little seating area within and outside my room," says Savita, who was born in England and has lived in India for more than twelve years now. She has been connected with the Osho Commune in Pune as a journalist and more recently as part of the theatre group within the ashram, directing and acting in plays. Like most *sannyasins* (disciples of Osho) that live in Koregaon Park, Savita has rented a portion of a bungalow and got it designed by architect Manish Banker. "Like the westerners who like their homes more open, I have broken down the walls and extended the balcony, so the interior spaces are connected with the exterior surroundings," explains Savita as she slides open the French windows and multiple images of the green outside map the mirror-clad wardrobes that occupy one entire wall - floor to ceiling.

"It's lovely to watch all the action at the river," says Savita. I know what she means, for I see buffaloes wallowing in the water, birds using their shimmering backs as surfboards! "With a bird sanctuary on the opposite bank, there is seldom a dull moment down at the river," says Savita, and goes on to elaborate about the house, "Manish Banker designed not only the interiors but also the landscaping."

The interiors have a cave-like feel due to sections of two rugged, broken walls, textured on the edges, separating the bedroom and



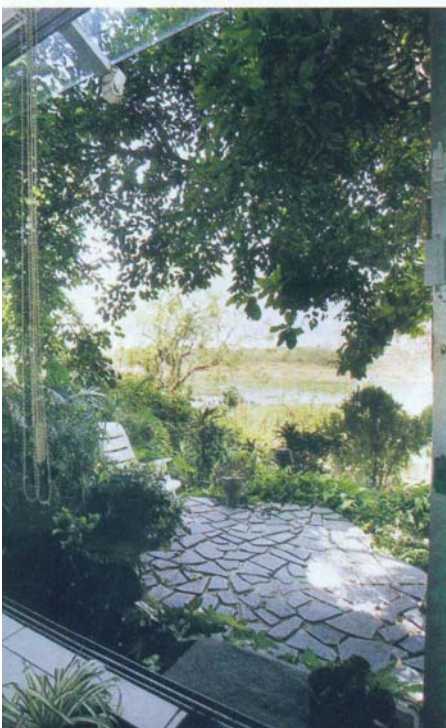
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THIS HOME'S PROXIMITY TO THE ASHRAM, THE SOFT CHIRPING OF THE BIRDS, SAVITA'S CAT MEWING HYPNOTICALLY FOR MORE FOOD OR A SYMPHONY OF ALL THAT MADE ME FEEL A SENSE OF PEACE SETTLING RIGHT DOWN TO MY SOUL AS I LEFT SAVITA'S HOME!



the workplace from a seating area. Overlooking a small garden and the river beyond, this area too has its share of plants. There are square trenches into which the planters are placed so only the green portion of the plants can be seen at floor level. Another peculiarity are the little moats filled with tiny white pebbles around the broken walls. "Manish has designed a lot of homes in the Commune and his work has a hint of the Zen art of design." The pebbles find their origin in the traditional Zen garden where little stones are scattered around a large stone and raked occasionally to form different designs. The interiors are all white (the flooring is in white tiles which was the only requirement Savita insisted on) and the reflections from the mirror magnify the space. "This room was originally a kitchen so there was a row of cabinets along the ceiling," says Savita. With a preference for straight, clean lines, the cabinets run right down to the floor, their symmetry broken only by a niche that forms Savita's workplace.

A flapping of wings leads us into the garden outside where a falcon has found refuge in the almond tree. There is a small landing just enough for a few people to sit before the land dips down to the river. Hidden within the bushes and plants around are fibreglass lamps shaped like rocks and look comfortably camouflaged. A flight of steps, narrowed by an abundance of plants and shrubs leads to the river.

I don't know if it was this home's proximity to the Ashram, the soft chirping of the birds, Savita's cat meowing hypnotically for more food or a symphony of all that made me feel a sense of peace settling right down to my soul as I left Savita's home!



Previous page, left: White was the colour Manish worked with and designed the bed with the wedged edges to give it a 'floaty' look.

Right: A broken wall with rugged edges divides the bedroom from the seating area. "During the monsoons it is bliss to watch the rain splash down on the French windows and watch the river fill up, sometimes right up to the garden outside!" says Savita. **Bottom:**

The mirrored wardrobes continue into the covered balcony beyond the broken wall. Seen here is also the moat filled with little white pebbles around the wall. **This page, top:** There is a small landing just enough for a few people to sit before the land dips down to the river. **Left:** A paved patch of land surrounded by a cluster of bushes and trees, a few steps below the house, makes for a lovely garden from where more steps lead down to the river. **Right:** The river is a hub of activity with water hyacinths floating by, birds coming down for their supply of food and the buffaloes for a daily splash in the water!

